

Dr. Marielena DeSanctis

President

Community College of Denver



Dr. Marielena DeSanctis is a distinguished leader in higher education, serving as President of the Community College of Denver (CCD). With over 26 years of experience in classroom instruction, curriculum development, instructional design, and leadership in both K-12 and higher education, she brings a wealth of expertise to her role.

She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech. Her vision extends beyond traditional two-year institutions—she believes that community colleges are leaders in innovation, redefining higher education for future generations.

Under her leadership, CCD prioritizes workforce-aligned education and student-centered learning, ensuring that academic programs directly support high-wage labor market needs. She has spearheaded partnerships with businesses and community organizations to provide students with real-world experience, strengthening the connection between education and economic opportunity.

A nationally recognized thought leader in education and workforce development, Dr. DeSanctis represented CCD at the White House's Classroom to Career Summit, collaborating with national leaders to expand career pathways; and has served in multiple roles for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine including as

co-chair of the Board on Higher Education and the Workforce. Her leadership is defined by a commitment to collaboration and driving economic mobility through higher education.

Beyond her professional achievements, she is a dedicated advocate for lifelong learning and community engagement. As CCD's President, she remains focused on creating pathways that empower students to achieve financial stability and long-term success, ensuring CCD continues to be a hub of academic excellence and the talent pipeline to Colorado's thriving economy.



Janine Davidson, Ph.D.

President

Metropolitan State University of Denver



Janine Davidson, Ph.D., has served as president of Metropolitan State University of Denver since 2017. She is a national thought leader in higher education, public service, U.S. foreign policy and national security.

Davidson's administration has increased funding from the State of Colorado, grown the University's endowment significantly, expanded online learning opportunities and improved financial aid and transfer experiences. In 2023, MSU Denver earned the prestigious Seal of *Excelencia* for our long record of serving Latino students.

As President of Colorado's third-largest public university, Davidson launched the University's Classroom to Career Hub, connecting students with approximately 5,5000 workforce partners across 21 industries. She has also overseen the creation of the MSU Denver Health Institute – a collaboration of 10 academic departments in health-related fields that addresses state healthcare-industry shortages – and the Institute for Public Service, which is focused on inspiring, preparing, and enabling students to serve with an emphasis on careers in government and the nonprofit sector.

Davidson began her career as an Air Force officer and cargo pilot. She was a distinguished graduate of the Air Force Squadron Officer School and was the first woman to fly the Air Force's tactical C-130. Prior to her time at MSU Denver, Davidson served

as the 32nd undersecretary of the U.S. Navy, appointed by then-President Barack Obama.

She has taught at George Mason University, Georgetown University, Davidson College, and various professional military schools, and was an aviation and aerobatics flight instructor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. She returned to the classroom in 2020 at MSU Denver, co-teaching a course on the philosophical and legal origins of freedom of speech in the United States.



Josh Wyner

Founder and Executive Director
College Excellence Program, Aspen Institute



Joshua Wyner is the founder and executive director of the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, where he also serves as a vice president. CEP aims to advance college and university practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes, with a focus on students who are historically underserved in higher education.

Josh has spent the past three decades designing and building new organizations that promote talent development and social mobility. He has authored numerous publications about education, including a book, *What Excellent Community Colleges Do: Preparing All Students for Success*.

He has a B.A. from Vassar College, a MPA from Syracuse University, and a J.D. from New York University School of Law.

Dr. Jason Dodge

Associate Vice President

**Services & Solutions at the Partnership for
Education Advancement**



Dr. Jason Dodge serves as Associate Vice President of Services and Solutions at the Partnership for Education Advancement. In this role, he oversees and manages the strategic roadmap for enrollment management and student success-related services and solutions and provides subject matter expertise to cross-organization projects.

With 15 years of experience in higher education leadership at the community college and university level, Jason's experience across the student lifecycle includes leading programs and units focused on student recruitment and admissions, marketing and communications, retention and graduation, and program operations.

Before joining Ed Advancement, Jason held positions at George Mason University and the University of Central Florida, focusing on strategic enrollment management and the development of cross-campus and cross-institutional coordinated student services networks.

Jason holds an M.Ed in Student Personnel in Higher Education and an Ed.D in Higher Education Administration & Policy, both from the University of Florida.